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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT 1. Morale of Czechoslovak Army Troops  
2. Propaganda in the Czechoslovak Army

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1. The revised daily training schedule of the Czech Army went into effect on 1 Oct 50. Under the new order, enlisted men were deprived of all free time after working hours and were compelled to attend political indoctrination lectures along the Marxist-Stalinist-Stottwaldist lines, or to participate in the activities of the SCM (Svaz Československe Mladeze - Czechoslovak Communist Youth League), which glorified the Soviet Union and the "Socialism" of Czechoslovakia. Leaves and passes were greatly curtailed. Under previous rules and regulations, an enlisted man was allowed an eight-day leave each year aside from compassionate leave. On 1 Oct 50 this policy was revoked, and instead, a leave of from one to 10 days was instituted; it was granted only for exceptionally meritorious service such as saving government property, someone else's life at the risk of one's own, etc. Compassionate leaves were still granted in case of death or serious illness in the immediate family. Passes were also greatly curtailed, and a man had to earn the pass by being a model soldier, excelling in marksmanship or in sport or by being outstanding in his political activities with SCM.
2. As a rule, a soldier may not complain; he is told by his political instructor that "This is done in the Soviet Union; therefore, it would be a shame to do otherwise here." Only among trusted friends do enlisted men grumble bitterly that, instead of rest and recreation, they are compelled to attend hours of long-winded political indoctrination and are often used for the so-called "voluntary brigade activities" during

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which they have to work for as long as 12 to 16 hours per day and must establish "Stakhanovite" records. Usually the "voluntary" activities mean harvesting grain in the summer and potatoes or sugar beets in the fall. Enlisted men are very disappointed in their low pay. An enlisted man is paid 10 Czech crowns per day, just enough to buy 10 poor quality cigarettes. The cigarette ration, three per day, also causes complaints. Soldiers do not complain about food. Although they know that the quality and quantity of food is less than it was under Masaryk and Benes, they also realize that they are fed much better than many civilian employees. In general, the soldiers realize that they have been deprived of many of their former privileges, but they cannot complain, at least officially, because they would immediately lose that all-important classification - "politically reliable."

3. The activities of SCM at the Zilina QM School were mainly concerned with political indoctrination through lectures, musicales, and theater performances sponsored by the SCM club to improve morale. The political section of SCM evidently believed that if it hammered the "truth" into the

some truth in the minds of those officers. During every meeting of SCM which I attended, a political instructor took every opportunity to praise anything which might be said to carry the "made in the USSR" stamp; ie, military science, technological progress, unquestionable loyalty, and the spirit of self-sacrifice of the Red Army. There was constant repetition of the platitude that the USSR is the champion of peace, truth, and justice, and that it is firmly resolved to defend the privileges of the working masses. Promises were made that the USSR would soon use atomic energy to run power plants and dig canals for transportation and irrigation; all of this was solely for the benefit of the farmers and industrial workers of Czechoslovakia. It was easy to discern the discrepancies between propaganda and reality, between the poverty of the people under the Communist regime and the prosperity which existed under Masaryk. But no one dared to criticize either the Communist ideology or policies. Officers in training resented the glorification of the USSR combined with the political instructors' completely ignoring the industrial and cultural achievements of their own country; yet they could do nothing but agree with him. Frank criticism was unthinkable because of the fear of being branded as "political unreliable" and suffering the consequences.

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